ITT Executive Denies He Got Beard Memo

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William R. Merriam, director of the Washington office of the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp., testified yesterday that he never received any memorandum about ITT's contribution to the Republican National Convention from lobbyist Dita D. Beard.

In a tumultuous session of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Merriam contradicted virtually everything that Mrs. Beard had already testified to under oath.

The portly, jovial Merriam, a vice president of ITT, is the addressee of a memorandum allegedly signed by Mrs. Beard, which links settlement of three antitrust cases by the Justice Department to the corporation's pledge of at least $200,000 to help bring the GOP convention to San Diego.

Mrs. Beard, interviewed two

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weeks ago in a Denver hospital room, denied the authenticity of the memo, which was published by columnist Jack Anderson.

Her version was that at Merriam's request, she wrote a different memorandum—containing some of the sentences in the version produced by Anderson—discussing only the convention contribution and not the antitrust cases.

That recollection has been supported in sworn affidavits submitted to the Senate committee by Susan B. Lichtman, Mrs. Beard's former part-time secretary.

The memo she did write, Mrs. Beard testified, was spurred by a White House phone call to Merriam, asking whether the ITT contribution was for as much as $600,000 and whether that amount might be going directly into President Nixon's reelection campaign fund.

The lobbyist said that she personally handed that memo to Merriam in ITT's Washington office on L Street N.W.

Merriam, however, admitted yesterday that he had "deceived" Mrs. Beard in telling her that the phone call was from the White House, because it actually came from Jack Gleason, a former White House aide who is now a consultant for ITT here.

He said he did that because Mrs. Beard "has a strong antipathy toward Mr. Gleason" and she would have discredited any information that came from him.

Anyway, Merriam testified, he never received the memo. Mrs. Beard says she wrote, he was not in the office on the day it was allegedly typed—June 25, 1971—and he never heard the figure of $600,000 mentioned.

He also conceded that he "fudged" and "hedged" in telling Rep. Bob Wilson on Feb. 28 that he had received a memorandum from Mrs. Beard.

After discovering later the same day that in his view he could not have received her memo, Merriam testified, he did not bother to call Wilson back and tell him because "I didn't think it was necessary . . . I didn't think it was that germane."

At the point when Merriam acknowledged to the committee that he had consciously "deceived" the lobbyist, Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) demanded to know, "How can a member of this commtitee expect you to tell the truth?"

As Ervin excoriated Merriam on several issues for about half an hour, the ITT vice president complained, "You're putting me in a box now." A few moments later, Merriam conceded, "With everything I say, "I'm getting in worse."

There were these other developments on the 13th day of the Judiciary Committee's reopened hearings on the nomination of Richard G. Kleindienst as Attorney General:

• Committee Chairman James O. Eastland (D-Miss.) released a letter from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover reaffirming the bureau's earlier conclusion that, on the basis of laboratory tests, the Anderson-published memo appears to have been typed on Mrs. Beard's typewriter in the ITT offices on the date indicated.

ITT has released its own laboratory tests on the disputed memo, done by private experts in New York and Chicago, contending that it was written much later, perhaps in January or February of this year.

Eastland has already announced that he places more faith in the FBI findings.

• Wilson, the leadoff witness at yesterday's hearings, insisted again that ITT's commitment to the GOP convention as expressed informally to him by ITT President Harold S. Geneen, was for a "guarantee" of $400,000.

Geneen has testified that there was never any commitment for more than $200,000.

• The San Diego congressman also contradicted Geneen's assertion before the committee on March 29 that the two of them had never discussed antitrust policy.

• Talking to reporters during a luncheon break from the hearings, Wilson insisted that President Nixon has committed himself to using a new hotel, under construction by the Sheraton subsidiary of ITT, as his convention headquarters in San Diego. But Wilson said he does not know who can verify that commitment.

Presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said at a recent White House briefing that the President has no such plans, a statement that prompted Geneen to say that ITT's financial commitment might be "abrogated."

But Wilson told the reporters that "ITT will have to work pretty hard to get its money back" in that event. "We can reason with ITT," he added.

• Sen. John V. Tunney (D-Calif.) repeated and strengthened his charges that some witnesses may have committed perjury in their testimony before the Senate committee.

"There is no question that there should be an investigation by the Justcie Department of perjury charges," Tunney declared. He suggested that it might be appropriate to convene a special federal grand jury for that purpose.

• Sen. Edward M. Kennedy

(D-Mass.) observed that although no clear link had been established between the antitrust settlement and the convention contribution, most of the other details in the memorandum published by Anderson had been confirmed in testimony.

Racing against a self-imposed deadline of April 20 for taking testimony on the Kleindienst nomination and the ITT affair, the Judiciary Committee met for almost six hours yesterday, adjourning at 6 p.m.

The committee deferred action on a proposal by Ervin to continue the hearings indefinitely should White House aide Peter M. Flanigan decline an "invitation" to testify.

Flanigan, who recruited the financial analyst whose advice was central in the Justice Department's decision to settle the ITT antitrust cases, has not yet indicated whether he will appear.

But Ervin, angry at the prospect that the White House will invoke "executive privilege" to prevent Flanigan's testimony," vowed to force a vote on his proposal to extend the hearings indefinitely.

For the first time in weeks, Republican members of the Judiciary Committee were almost completely silent during yesterday's hearing and did not cross-examine the witnesses extensively.

During much of the day, only Sen. Edward J. Gurney (R-Fla.) was present on the Republican side of the committee table.

Gurney intervened on several occasions to urge that Merriam clarify his testimony, such as when the ITT vice president said that he directed the wholesale destruction of ITT office files here because "there might have been a lot of others (memos) in there like" the one published by Anderson.

Both Merriam and Wilson were grilled intensively by committee Democrats, however.

Sen. Quentin N. Burdick (D-N.D.), for example, demanded to know why Wilson, in three interviews with San Diego newsmen on March 3, never said that Mrs. Beard had told him she did not write the Anderson-published memo.

In all of those interviews, Wilson appears to say just the opposite, that the lobbyist confirmed writing it.

Wilson's answer was that "I didn't have any obligation to raise the authenticity of the memo" in the interviews.

The hearing room broke into an uproar at the end of the day when Merriam said, "I have 18 people working for me, plus 14 girls."

As the laughter subsided, Merriam corrected himself to say "18 men and 14 girls." Then he added, "At least it wasn't boring this afternoon."